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thetics of textile element 40. Whereas a conventional upper includes various elements that stitched or adhesively joined, textile element 40 is a single, unitary element of material. From the perspective of manufacturing, utilizing multiple materials to impart different properties to an article of footwear may be an inefficient practice. By forming textile element 40 to be a single, unitary element of material, however, efficiency is increased in that upper 20 may include a single textile element, rather than numerous joined elements.

A variety of knitting processes may be utilized to form textile element 40, as discussed above. As a specific example, a jacquard double needle-bar raschel knitting machine may be utilized to form a flat textile structure, and may also be utilized to form the textile structure to have the configuration of a spacer mesh textile. Unlike textile structure 60, which exhibits a generally cylindrical configuration, the textile structure formed with the jacquard double needle-bar raschel knitting machine will have a flat configuration. Like textile structure 60, however, an outline of a textile element may be imparted to the textile structure formed with the jacquard double needle-bar raschel knitting machine. That is, differences in the stitches within the textile structure may form an outline with the shape and proportions of the intended textile element. Accordingly, the textile element may be removed from the textile structure and incorporated into footwear 10. In addition, the jacquard double needle-bar raschel knitting machine may be utilized to impart various textures, different properties, or different yarn types to the textile element. Similarly, other types of knitting, such as a flat knitting, may be utilized within the scope of the present invention to impart various textures, different properties, or different yarn types to the textile element.

The present invention is disclosed above and in the accompanying drawings with reference to a variety of embodiments. The purpose served by the disclosure, however, is to provide an example of the various features and concepts related to the invention, not to limit the scope of the invention. One skilled in the relevant art will recognize that numerous variations and modifications may be made to the embodiments described above without departing from the scope of the present invention, as defined by the appended claims.

We claim:

1. A method of manufacturing an article of footwear, the method comprising:

simultaneously knitting a textile element with a surrounding textile structure, the knitted textile element having at least one knitted texture that differs from a knitted texture in the surrounding knitted textile structure;
removing the knitted textile element from the surrounding knitted textile structure;
incorporating the knitted textile element into the article of footwear.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein simultaneously knitting a textile element with a surrounding textile structure includes simultaneously knitting a plurality of textile elements.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein simultaneously knitting a textile element with a surrounding textile structure includes knitting an outline of the knitted textile element.

4. The method of claim 3, wherein the outline has the shape and proportion of the knitted textile element.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein the knitted textile element has a substantially planar configuration upon removal from the surrounding knitted textile structure.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein the knitted textile element includes longitudinal edges formed when the knitted textile element is removed from the surrounding knitted textile structure.

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7. The method of claim 6, wherein the longitudinal edges are joined together to define at least a portion of a void for receiving a foot.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein the knitted textile element has a plurality of different knitted textures formed by varying at least one of the stitch type and the yarn type.

9. The method of claim 1, wherein simultaneously knitting a textile element with a surrounding textile structure includes utilizing a wide-tube circular knitting machine.

10. The method of claim 1, wherein simultaneously knitting a textile element with a surrounding textile structure includes utilizing a jacquard double needle-bar raschel knitting machine.

11. The method of claim 1, wherein simultaneously knitting a textile element with a surrounding textile structure includes forming the knitted textile element to include a first area and a second area with a unitary construction, the first area being formed of a first stitch configuration, and the second area being formed of a second stitch configuration that is different from the first stitch configuration to impart varying textures to a surface of the knitted textile element.

12. The method of claim 1, wherein incorporating the knitted textile element into the article of footwear includes securing edges of the knitted textile element to form a seam that extends along a lower region of an upper and securing the upper to a sole structure.

13. A method of manufacturing an article of footwear, the method comprising:

knitting a first textile element and a second textile element simultaneously with knitting a surrounding textile structure, the first knitted textile element located within a first portion of the knitted textile structure, the second knitted textile element located within a second portion of the knitted textile structure,

varying at least one of the types of stitches or the types of yarns in the knitted textile structure to impart a texture to the first and second knitted textile elements different from a texture of the knitted textile structure extending between the first and second portions;

removing the first and second knitted textile elements from the knitted textile structure;

incorporating at least one of the first and second knitted textile elements into the article of footwear.

14. The method of claim 13, wherein knitting a first textile element simultaneously with a surrounding knitted textile structure includes knitting an outline of the first knitted textile element.

15. The method of claim 13, wherein the first and second knitted textile elements have substantially planar configurations upon removal from the surrounding knitted textile structure.

16. The method of claim 13, wherein the first knitted textile element includes longitudinal edges formed when the first knitted textile element is removed from the surrounding knitted textile structure.

17. The method of claim 16, wherein the longitudinal edges are joined together to define at least a portion of a void for receiving a foot.

18. The method of claim 16, wherein incorporating the first knitted textile element into the article of footwear includes securing the longitudinal edges of the first knitted textile element to form a seam that extends along a lower region of an upper.

19. The method of claim 13, wherein knitting the first and second knitted textile elements simultaneously with a surrounding knitted textile structure includes utilizing a wide-tube circular knitting machine.